

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2750

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 1438

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS MY US

SUBJ: U.S. AND OTHER FOREIGN RESIDENTS CONCERNED OVER MANDATORY
PARTICIPATION IN RUKUN TETANGGA PATROLS

REF: (A) 75 KUALA LUMPUR A-154, (B) MEMCON OF 11/19/75 (MAJOR
BUSTAMI) NOTAL, (C) MEMCON OF 11/20/75 (ALEX LEE) NOTAL

1. SUMMARY. SYSTEM OF HOUSEHOLD REGISTRATION AND MANDATORY
PATROLING OF NEIGHBORHOODS BY MALES FROM 18 TO 55 UNDER "RUKUN
TETANGGA" (RT) REGULATIONS HAS BEGUN TO WORRY U.S. AND OTHER
FOREIGN RESIDENTS OF MALAYSIA AS NUMBER OF ORGANIZED RT
SECTORS HAS INCREASED AND MORE FOREIGNERS ARE AFFECTED. EMBASSY
IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED OVER LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS OF RT DUTY
FOR THOSE USG EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS, WHO
ARE NOT EXEMPT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS.
GOM OFFICIALS DO NOT SEEM INCLINED TO EXEMPT PRIVATE FOREIGNERS
FROM RT DUTY AND U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS BEGUN SEEKING
EMBASSY GUIDANCE ON THE MATTER. GETMAN EMBASSY ALSO UNDER
PRESSURE FROM ITS VOLUNTEERS TO OBTAIN EXEMPTION FROM
MANDATORY SERVICE, BUT OTHER FOREIGN EMBASSIES EITHER DO
NOT SEEM TO BE WORRIED OR FEEL IT IS HOPELESS TO
INTERVENE. DEPT'S VIEWS REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

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2. "RUKUN TETANGGA" (RT -- LITERALLY "PILLARS OF THE

COMMUNITY") OR "COMMUNITY SELF-RELIANCE" REGULATIONS OF SEPT 10, 1975, HAVE BEGUN TO AROUSESOME CONCERN AMONG THE RESIDENT U.S. AND OTHER FOREIGN COMMUNITIES HERE. THE LAW, WHICH AS DRAFTED APPLIES TO EVERYONE RESIDENT IN THE COUNTRY FOR 30 DAYS OR OVER, REQUIRES HOUSEHOLDERS TO REGISTER THE PARTICULARS OF ALL THOSE LIVING WITH THEM WITH RT DISTRICT COMMITTEES WHERE THEY ARE KEPT ON FILE. ON THE BASIS OF THESE REGISTRATIONS, ALL ABLE BODIED MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 55 -- EXCEPT DIPLOMATS, THE BLIND AND THE INSANE -- ARE PLACED ON PATROLING ROSTERS AND ARE LIABLE TO BE CALLED FOR PATROL DUTY AT LEAST ONCE BUT NO MORE THAN TWICE A MONTH. WHEN ON PATROL RT PATROLMEN HAVE THE POWERS OF POLICE CONSTABLES BUT, UNTIL NOW, ONLY CARRY BILLY CLUBS. (HOWEVER, THEY ARE PERMITTED TO CARRY PERSONAL LICENSED FIREARMS AND SOME MENTION HAS BEEN MADE OF ARMING RT PATROLMEN IN AREAS WHERE TERRORISTS OPERATE.) A SUMMARY PLUS THE FULL TEXT OF THE RT REGULATIONS ARE CONTAINED IN REF A.

3. THE RT REGULATIONS IN EFFECT DUPLICATE THE "HOME GUARD" ORGANIZATION OF CIVILIAN UNITS SET UP DURING THE 1948-1960 EMERGENCY EXCEPT THAT THE LATTER WERE ARMED WITH FIREARMS AND WERE SUPERVISED BY THE POLICE. FOR WHAT ARE BELIEVED TO BE POLITICAL REASONS, THE RT WAS NOT PLACED UNDER THE POLICE BUT INSTEAD IS (POSSIBLY "WAS" SINCE THE RECENT CABINET CHANGES) UNDER A POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, ABDULLAH AHMAD. ALTHOUGH WHEN ENACTED THE RT REGULATIONS CLEARLY WERE AIMED AT AUGMENTING THE ABILITY OF THE OVERBURDENED POLICE TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR POTENTIALLY SUBVERSIVE CHARACTERS, THEY HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS A MEANS TO IMBUE THE POPULACE WITH "THE SPIRIT OF RESPONSIBILITY AND DEDICATION, TO BRING ABOUT NATIONAL RESILIENCE." THE RT IS SUPPOSED TO BE PRACTICED "IN THE SPIRIT OF GOOD NEIGHBORLINESS" AND TO ENABLE LOCAL RESIDENTS TO "CULTIVATE GOODWILL AMONG NEIGHBORS AND MUTUALLY SAFEGUARD LIVES AND PROPERTY; COOPERATE TO SAVE THE COMING GENERATION FROM SOCIAL EVILS; JOIN FORCES TOWARDS A GOOD CAUSE; COOPERATE IN EFFORTS TOWARDS THE WELFARE OF SOCIETY; AND TO HELP ONE ANOTHER DURING A DISASTER OR IN AN EMERGENCY."

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IF THE RULES FOR THE PANTAI HILLS DISTRICT, SENT TO US BY A PROTESTING AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN, ARE ANY INDICATION, THE CHIEF ACTIVITY OF THE RT DISTRICT COMMITTEE AT PRESENT IS TO KEEP TWO MAN PATROLS (IN A CAR) ON THE ROADS OF THE AREA BETWEEN THE HOURS OF MIDNIGHT AND FOUR A.M. IN LESS AFFLUENT DISTRICTS, PATROLS ARE ON FOOT AND CONCERN WAS HEIGHTENED WHEN AN RT POLICEMAN WAS STABBED MARCH 1 WHILE TRYING TO APPREHEND A FLEEING YOUTH. (COMPENSATION IS PROVIDED

UNDER ARTICLE 30 OF THE REGULATIONS BUT MAXIMUM
COMPENSATION LIKELY TO BE FORTHCOMING PROBABLY WOULD BE
QUITE MEAGRE BY AMERICAN OR EUROPEAN STANDARDS.)

4. AS FAR AS THE EMBASSY IS CONCERNED, THERE APPEAR TO BE
TWO PROBLEMS; THE FIRST INVOLVES PARTICIPATION BY USG
EMPLOYEES WHO ARE NOT ON THE DIPLOMATIC LIST, INCLUDING
U.S. ARMY OFFICERS WITH THE ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH UNIT
(USAMRU), EMBASSY STAFF PERSONNEL, PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS
AND SOME STAFF, AND OTHERS; THE SECOND INVOLVES THE
AMERICAN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA.
WE HAVE JUST BEEN NOTIFIED THAT A USAMRU OFFICER HAS BEEN
APPROACHED BY HIS NEIGHBORHOOD RT COMMITTEE, AND SINCE
USAMRU PERSONNEL DO NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS WE ARE
CONCERNED OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF U.S. ARMY OFFICERS
PARTICIPATING IN QUASI-MILITARY ACTIVITY IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY.
THE DIRECTOR OF THE PC IN MALAYSIA WROTE TO ACTION'S
GENERAL COUNSEL MARCH 2 NOTING THAT SOME PCV'S REGARD THE
RT AS A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION "DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO STEM
COMMUNITY CRIME BUT ONE WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE USED TO
FERRET OUT COMMUNIST INSURGENTS OR OTHER TERRORISTS
AS WELL." THIS IS ALSO A MATTER OF CONCERN TO THE UNDP
OFFICE HERE AND TO THE GERMAN EMBASSY WHICH HAS BEEN IN
TOUCH WITH BONN REGARDING GERMAN VOLUNTEERS' OBJECTIONS
TO RT SERVICE. WE ARE ATTEMPTING AN APPROACH TO
THE MFA REGARDING THE STATUS OF USAMRU PERSONNEL, PCV'S,
OTHER USG EMPLOYEES NOT ON THE DIPLOMATIC LIST AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION PERSONNEL, REQUESTING THAT
THEY BE INCLUDED IN THE RT REGULATIONS "DIPLOMATIC"
DESIGNATION. IN THE CASE OF THE
PCV'S A RULING BY THE ACTION GENERAL COUNSEL THAT
SUCH SERVICE WOULD VIOLATE U.S. STATUTES COULD FACILITATE
FAVORABLE ACTION BY THE GOM.
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INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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5. BUSINESSMEN ARE IN A DIFFERENT POSITION. INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH MAJOR HAJI BUSTAMI BIN HAJI SHARBANI (REF B) INDICATE THAT HE FAVORS PARTICIPATION BY FOREIGNERS. SINCE FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES HE IS OPERATING HEAD OF THE RT PROGRAM, HE IS NOT LIKELY TO DO ANYTHING TO REMOVE FOREIGNERS FROM THE OPERATION OF THE ACT. IT WOULD BE NECESSARY, THEREFORE, TO TAKE THE MATTER UP AT A FAIRLY HIGH LEVEL, POSSIBLY POINTING OUT THAT THE RT REQUIREMENT COULD HAVE SOME NEGATIVE EFFECT ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT SINCE FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN PROBABLY WILL FIND THAT THEIR PERSONAL LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE IS VOIDED WHEN ON PATROL. OTHERS WHO TRAVEL A GREAT DEAL BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE COUNTRY ALSO FIND THE REQUIREMENT ONEROUS, AND THEY DISLIKE THE IMPLICATIONS OF POLICE DUTY IN A FOREIGN LAND.

6. DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS REQUESTED.

UNDERHILL

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